News release

Hurricane Beta batters the Caribbean

29 October 2005

At 10 a.m. UK time Saturday, the centre of Hurricane Beta was located about 145 miles south-east of Cabo Gracias a Dios, and about 130 miles east of Puerto Cabezas, Nicaragua.

Beta is moving northwest at around 3 m.p.h. A continued slow motion north-west or west-north-west is expected during the next 24 hours. However, since steering currents are expected to remain weak, some erratic motion will be possible, and Beta could even become stationary at times.

Maximum sustained winds associated with this system are near 80 m.p.h., with higher gusts. At present, Beta is a Category 1 Hurricane on the Saffir-Simpson scale, but it is forecast to strengthen over the next 24 hours, and could become a strong Category 2 Hurricane before it makes landfall along the east coast of Nicaragua.

Hurricane force winds extend outward up to 15 miles from the centre, and Tropical Storm force winds extend outward up to 50 miles from the centre.

Storm surge flooding of 4 to 7 feet above normal tide levels is still possible on Providencia while the centre of Hurricane Beta is nearby. Storm Surge flooding of 10 to 13 feet above normal tide levels is possible along the eastern coast of Nicaragua, near and to the north of where the centre makes landfall.

Hurricane Beta is expected to produce torrential rainfall with totals of 10 to 15 inches across north-eastern Honduras, Nicaragua, San Andres and Providencia, with isolated maximum amounts of 20 inches possible. Rainfall totals may exceed 25 inches on Providencia Island.

By 7 a.m. UK time Sunday, Beta is expected to be close to the eastern Nicaraguan coast, with maximum sustained winds of 85 m.p.h. and gusts to 125 m.p.h..

For the latest satellite imagery from the area and information on the movement of the storm check the Met Office tropical cyclone information page, which includes a link to the National Hurricane Center and major national weather services around the world.

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